

the Almighty, the Supreme Being, the Lord, Providence, the Messiah, the Holy Spirit.

4. Proper names of persons, places, streets, mountains, rivers, ships: as, "George, York, the Strand, the Alps, the Thames, the Seahorse."

5. Adjectives derived from the proper names of places: as, "Grecian, Roman, English, French, Italian."

6. Words of particular importance: as, "the Reformation, the Restoration, the Revolution."

7. The first word of a quotation, introduced after a colon, or when it is in a direct form: as, "Always remember this ancient maxim: 'Know thyself.'" "Our great Lawgiver says, 'Take up thy cross daily, and follow me.'" But when a quotation is brought in obliquely after a comma, a capital is unnecessary: as, "Solomon observes, 'that pride goes before destruction.'"

The first word of an example may also very properly begin with a capital: as, "Temptation proves our virtue."

8. Every substantive and principal word in the titles of books: as, "Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language;" "Thomson's Seasons;" "Rollin's Ancient History."

9. The first word of every line in poetry.

10. The pronoun *I*, and the interjection *O*! are written in capitals: as, "I write;" "Hear, O earth!"

Other words, besides the preceding, may begin with capitals, when they are remarkably emphatical, or the principal subject of the composition.

# APPENDIX:

CONTAINING

RULES AND OBSERVATIONS,

FOR ASSISTING YOUNG PERSONS

TO WRITE WITH

*PERSPICUITY AND ACCURACY.*

TO BE STUDIED

AFTER THEY HAVE ACQUIRED A COMPETENT KNOWLEDGE OF

ENGLISH GRAMMAR.

# APPENDIX.

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## RULES AND OBSERVATIONS FOR PROMOTING PERSPICUITY AND ACCURACY IN WRITING.

PERSPICUITY is the fundamental quality of style; a quality so essential in every kind of writing, that for the want of it nothing can atone. It is not to be considered as merely a sort of negative virtue, or freedom from defect. It has higher merit: it is a degree of positive beauty. We are pleased with an author, and consider him as deserving praise, who frees us from all fatigue of searching for his meaning; who carries us through his subject without any embarrassment or confusion; whose style flows always like a limpid stream, through which we see to the very bottom.

The study of perspicuity and accuracy of expression consists of two parts; and requires attention, first, to *Single Words and Phrases*; and then, to the *Construction of Sentences*.

### PART I.

#### *Of PERSPICUITY and ACCURACY of EXPRESSION, with respect to single Words and Phrases.*

THESE qualities of style, considered with regard to words and phrases, require the following properties: PURITY, PROPRIETY, and PRECISION.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### *Of PURITY.*

PURITY of style consists in the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak; in opposition to words and phrases that are taken from other languages, or that are ungrammatical, obsolete, new-coined, or used without proper authority. All such words and phrases as the following, should be avoided: *Quoth he*; *I wist not*; *erewhile*; *behest*; *selfsame*; *delicatefse*, for delicacy; *politefse*, for politeness; *hauteur*,



for haughtiness; *incumberment, connexity, martyrijed*, for encumbrance, connexion, martyred.

The introduction of foreign and learned words, unless where necessity requires them, should never be admitted into our composition. Barren languages may need such assistance, but ours is not one of these. A multitude of Latin words, in particular, have, of late, been poured in upon our language. On some occasions, they give an appearance of elevation and dignity to style; but they often render it stiff and apparently forced. In general, a plain, native style, is not only more intelligible to all readers, but by a proper management of words, it can be made equally strong and expressive with this Latinised English, or any foreign idioms.

## CHAPTER II.

### *Of PROPRIETY.*

PROPRIETY of language is the selection of such words as the best usage has appropriated to those ideas, which we intend to express by them; in opposition to low expressions, and to words and phrases which would be less significant of the ideas that we mean to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may all be strictly English, without Scotticisms or Gallicisms, or ungrammatical irregular expressions of any kind, and may, nevertheless, be deficient in propriety: for the words may be ill chosen, not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's sense.

To preserve propriety, therefore, in our words and phrases, we must avoid *low expressions; supply words that are wanting; be careful not to use the same word in different senses; avoid the injudicious use of technical phrases, equivocal or ambiguous words, unintelligible expressions, and all such words and phrases as are not adapted to our meaning.*

1. Avoid *low expressions*: such as, "Topsy turvy, hurly burly, pellmell; having a month's mind for a thing; carrying favour with a person; dancing attendance on the great," &c.

"Meantime the Britons, left to shift for themselves, were

forced to call in the Saxons for their defence." The phrase "*left to shift for themselves*," is a rather low phrase, and too much in the familiar style to be proper in a grave treatise.

2. *Supply words that are wanting.* "Arbitrary power I look upon as a greater evil than anarchy itself, as much as a savage is a happier state of life than a slave at the oar:" It should have been, "as much as *the state* of a savage is happier than *that* of a slave at the oar." "He has not treated this subject liberally, by the views of others as well as his own:" "By *adverting* to the views of others," would have been better. "This generous action greatly increased his former services:" it should have been, "greatly increased *the merit* of his former services." "By the pleasures of the imagination or fancy (which I shall use promiscuously) I here mean," &c. This passage ought to have had the word "terms" supplied, which would have made it correct: "*terms* which I shall use promiscuously."

It may be proper in this place to observe, that articles and prepositions are sometimes improperly omitted; as in the following instances: "How immense the difference between the pious and profane!" "Death is the common lot of all; of good men and bad." They should have had the article and preposition repeated: "How immense the difference between *the* pious and *the* profane?" "Death is the common lot of all; *of* good men and *of* bad."

The repetition of articles and prepositions is proper, when we intend to point out the objects of which we speak, as distinguished from each other, or in contrast; and when we wish that the reader's attention should rest on that distinction: as, "Our fight is at once *the* most delightful, and *the* most useful of all our senses."

3. *In the same sentence, be careful not to use the same word too frequently, nor in different senses.* "One may have an air *which* proceeds from a just sufficiency and knowledge of the matter before him, *which* may naturally produce some motions of his head and body, *which* might become the bench better than the bar."



The pronoun *which* is here thrice used, in such a manner as to throw obscurity over the sentence.

“Gregory favoured the undertaking, for no other reason than this, that the manager, in countenance, favoured his friend.” It should have been, “resembled his friend.”

“Charity expands our hearts in love to God and man: it is by the virtue of charity that the rich are blessed, and the poor supplied.” In this sentence, the word “charity” is improperly used in two different senses; for the highest benevolence, and for almsgiving.

4. *Avoid the injudicious use of technical terms.* To inform those who do not understand sea-phrases, that “We tacked to the larboard, and stood off to sea,” would be expressing ourselves very obscurely. Technical phrases not being in current use, but only the peculiar dialect of a particular class, we should never use them but when we know they will be understood.

5. *Avoid equivocal or ambiguous words.* The following sentences are exceptionable in this respect. “As for such animals as are *mortal* or noxious, we have a right to destroy them.” “I have long since learned to like nothing but what you *do*.” “He aimed at *nothing less* than the crown,” may denote either, “Nothing was less aimed at by him than the crown,” or, “Nothing inferior to the crown could satisfy his ambition.” “*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.*” The first part of this sentence, denotes “I will exercise mercy;” whereas it is in this place employed to signify, “I require others to exercise it.” The translation should therefore have been accommodated to these different meanings. “They were both much more ancient among the Persians, than Zoroaster or Zerdusht.” The *or* in this sentence is equivocal. It serves either as a copulative to synonymous words, or as a disjunctive of different things. If, therefore, the student should not know that Zoroaster and Zerdusht mean the same person, he will mistake the sense. “The rising tomb a lofty column bore:” “And thus the son the fervent fire address.” Did the



tomb bear the column, or the column the tomb? Did the son address the fire, or the fire the son?

6. *Avoid unintelligible and inconsistent words or phrases.*

“I have observed,” says Steele, “that the superiority among these coffeehouse politicians, proceeds from an opinion of gallantry and fashion.” This sentence, considered in itself, evidently conveys no meaning. First, it is not said whose opinion, their own, or that of others: Secondly, it is not said what opinion, or of what sort; favourable or unfavourable, true or false, but in general, “an opinion of gallantry and fashion,” which contains no definite expression of any meaning. With the joint assistance of the context, reflection, and conjecture, we shall perhaps conclude that the author intended to say: “That the rank among these politicians was determined by the opinion generally entertained of the rank, in point of gallantry and fashion, that each of them had attained.”

“This temper of mind,” says an author, speaking of humility, “keeps our understanding tight about us.” Whether the author had any meaning in this expression, or what it was, is not easy to determine.

Sometimes a writer runs on in a specious verbosity, amusing his reader with synonymous terms and identical propositions, well-turned periods, and high sounding words; but at the same time, using those words so indefinitely, that the reader can either affix no meaning at all to them, or may affix to them almost any meaning he pleases.

“If it is asked,” says a late writer, “whence arises the harmony or beauty of language? what are the rules for obtaining it? the answer is obvious. Whatever renders a period sweet and pleasant, makes it also graceful. A good ear is the gift of nature; it may be much improved, but not acquired by art. Whoever is possessed of it, will scarcely need dry critical precepts to enable him to judge of a true rhythmus, and melody of composition. Just numbers, accurate proportions, a musical symphony, magnificent figures, and that decorum which is the result of all these, are union to the human mind.”

The following is a poetical example of the same signature, in which there is scarcely a glimpse of meaning, tho' it was composed by an eminent poet.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,  
This universal frame began :  
From harmony to harmony  
Thro' all the compass of the notes it ran,  
The diapason closing full in man.

In general it may be said, that in writings of this stamp, we must accept of sound instead of sense; being assured, that if we meet with little that can inform the judgment, we shall at least find nothing that will offend the ear. And perhaps this is one reason that we pass over such smooth language, without suspecting that it contains little or no meaning. In order to write or speak clearly and intelligibly, two things are especially requisite: one, that we have clear and distinct ideas of our subject; and the other, that our words be approved signs of those ideas. That persons who think confusedly, should express themselves obscurely, is not to be wondered at; for embarrassed, obscure, and feeble sentences, are generally, if not always, the result of embarrassed, obscure, and feeble thought: but that persons of judgment, who are accustomed to scrutinize their ideas, and the signification of their words, should sometimes write without any meaning, is, at first sight, matter of admiration. This, however, when further considered, appears to be an effect derived from the same cause, indistinctness of conception, and inattention to the exact import of words. The occasions on which we are most apt to speak and write in this unintelligible manner, are the three following.

The *first* is, where there is an exuberance of metaphor. Writers who are fond of the metaphoric style, are generally disposed to continue it too long, and to pursue it too far. They are often misled by a desire of flourishing on the several properties of a metaphor which they have ushered into the discourse, without taking the trouble to examine whether there are any qualities in the subject, to which



these properties can, with justice and perspicuity, be applied. The following instance of this sort of writing is from an author of considerable eminence. "Men must acquire a very peculiar and strong habit of turning their view inward, in order to explore the interior regions and recesses of the mind, the hollow caverns of deep thought, the private seats of fancy, and the wastes and wildernesses, as well as the more fruitful and cultivated tracts of this obscure climate." A most wonderful way of telling us, that it is difficult to trace the operations of the mind. The author having determined to represent the human mind under the metaphor of a country, hath revolved in his thoughts the various objects which might be found in a country, without considering whether there are any things in the mind properly analogous to these. Hence the strange parade he makes with *regions* and *recesses*, *hollow caverns* and *private seats*, *wastes* and *wildernesses*, *fruitful* and *cultivated tracts*; words which, though they have a precise meaning as applied to country, have no definite signification as applied to mind.

The *second* occasion of our being apt to write unintelligibly, is that wherein the terms most frequently occurring, denote things which are of a complicated nature, and to which the mind is not sufficiently familiarised. Of these the instances are numberless in every tongue; such as, Government, church, state, constitution, power, legislature, jurisdiction, &c.

The *third* and principal occasion of unintelligible writing, is when the terms employed are very abstract, and consequently of very extensive signification. Thus the word *lion* is more distinctly apprehended by the mind than the word *beast*, *beast* than *animal*, and *animal* than *being*.

The 7th and last rule for preserving propriety in our words and phrases, is, *to avoid all those which are not adapted to the ideas we mean to communicate; or which are less significant than others, of those ideas.* "He feels any sorrow that can arrive at man;" better "happen to man." "The conscience



of approving one's self a benefactor, is the best recompense for being so:" it should have been "*consciousness*," He firmly believed the divine *precept*, "There is not a sparrow falls to the ground," &c. It should have been "*doctrine*."

"It is but opening the eye, and the scene enters." A *scene* cannot be said *to enter*; an *actor* enters; but a scene *appears*, or *presents itself*.

"We immediately assent to the beauty of an object, without inquiring into the causes of it:" it is proper to say, that we *assent* to the truth of a proposition; but it cannot so well be said, that we *assent to the beauty of an object*. *Acknowledge* would have expressed the sense with propriety.

"The sense of feeling, can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours." *Extension* and *shape* can, with no propriety, be called *ideas*; they are properties of matter. Neither is it accurate, to speak of any sense *giving us a notion of ideas*: our senses give us the ideas themselves. The meaning of the sentence would have been proper and much clearer, if the author had expressed himself thus: "The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us the idea of extension, figure, and all the other properties of matter, which are perceived by the eye, except colours."

"The covetous man never has a sufficiency; although he has what is enough for nature," is much inferior to, "The covetous man never has *enough*; although he has what is *sufficient* for nature."

"A traveller observes the most striking objects he sees; a general remarks all the motions of his enemy; better thus; "A traveller *remarks*," &c.; "A general *observes*," &c.

"This measure enlarged his school, and obliged him to increase the buildings;" It should be "*increased* his school; and "*enlarge* the buildings."

"He applied a medicine before the poison had time to work;" better thus; "He applied an *antidote*." &c.

"The poison of a suspicious temper frequently throws out its bad qualities, on all who are within its reach;" better, "throws out its *malignant* qualities."



A selection of words and phrases, which are peculiarly expressive of the ideas we design to communicate; or which are as particular and determinate in their signification, as is consistent with the nature and the scope of the discourse; possesses great beauty, and cannot fail to produce a good effect.

### CHAPTER III.

#### *Of Precision.*

PRECISION is the third requisite of perspicuity with respect to words and phrases. It signifies retrenching superfluities, and pruning the expression, so as to exhibit neither more nor less than an exact copy of the person's idea who uses it.

The words used to express ideas may be faulty in three respects. 1st, They may not express the idea which the author intends, but some other which only resembles or is a-kin to it; secondly, They may express that idea, but not fully and completely; thirdly, They may express it, together with something more than is intended. Precision stands opposed to these three faults, but chiefly to the last. Propriety implies a freedom from the two former faults. The words which are used may be *proper*; that is, they may express the idea intended, and they may express it fully; but to be *precise*, signifies that they express *that idea and no more*.

The use and importance of precision may be deduced from the nature of the human mind. It never can view, clearly and distinctly, more than one object at a time. If it must look at two or three together, especially objects that have resemblance or connexion, it finds itself confused and embarrassed. It cannot clearly perceive in what they agree, and in what they differ. Thus, were any object, suppose some animal, to be presented to my view, of whose structure I wanted to form a distinct notion, I would desire all its trappings to be taken off, I would require it to be brought before me by itself, and to stand alone, that there might be nothing to divide my attention. The same is the

case with words. If, when any one would inform me of his meaning, he also tell me more than what conveys it ; if he join foreign circumstances to the principal object ; if, by unnecessarily varying the expression, he shift the point of view, and make me see sometimes the object itself, and sometimes another thing that is connected with it, he thereby obliges me to look on several objects at once, and I lose sight of the principal. He loads the animal he is showing me, with so many trappings and collars, that I cannot distinctly view it ; or he brings so many of the same species before me, somewhat resembling, and yet somewhat differing, that I see none of them clearly. When an author tells me of his hero's courage in the day of battle, the expression is precise, and I understand it fully : But if, from the desire of multiplying words, he should praise his courage and fortitude ; at the moment he joins these words together, my idea begins to waver. He means to express one quality more strongly, but he is in truth expressing two : courage resists danger ; fortitude supports pain. The occasion of exerting each of these qualities is different ; and being led to think of both together, when only one of them should be considered, my view is rendered unsteady, and my conception of the object indistinct.

All subjects do not equally require precision. It is sufficient, on many occasions, that we have a general view of the meaning. The subject, perhaps, is of the known and familiar kind, and we are in no hazard of mistaking the sense of the author, though every word which he uses be not precise and exact.

Many authors offend against this rule of *precision*. A considerable one, in describing a bad action, expresses himself thus : “ It is to remove a good and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or disorderly one ; to commit an action that is ill, immoral, and unjust ; to do ill, or to act in prejudice of integrity, good nature, and worth.”

A crowd of unmeaning or useless words is brought together by some authors, who, afraid of expressing themselves in a common and ordinary manner, and allured by an ap-



pearance of splendour, surround every thing which they mean to say with a certain copious loquacity.

The great source of a loose style, in opposition to precision, is the injudicious use of the words termed *synonymous*. They are called synonymous, because they agree in expressing one principal idea; but, for the most part, if not always, they express it with some diversity in the circumstances.

The following instances show a difference in the meaning of words reputed synonymous, and point out the use of attending with care and strictness, to the exact import of words.

*Custom, habit*.—Custom, respects the action; habit, the actor. By custom, we mean the frequent repetition of the same act; by habit, the effect which that repetition produces on the mind or body. By the custom of walking often in the streets, one acquires a habit of idleness.

*Pride, vanity*.—Pride makes us esteem ourselves; vanity, makes us desire the esteem of others. It is just to say, that a man is too proud to be vain.

*Haughtiness, disdain*.—Haughtiness, is founded on the high opinion we entertain of ourselves; disdain, on the low opinion we have of others.

*Only, alone*.—Only, imports that there is no other of the same kind; alone, imports being accompanied by no other. An only child, is one who has neither brother nor sister; a child alone, is one who is left by itself. There is a difference, therefore, in precise language, between these two phrases: “Virtue only makes us happy;” and “Virtue alone makes us happy.”

*Wisdom, prudence*.—Wisdom leads us to speak and act what is most proper. Prudence, prevents our speaking or acting improperly.

*Entire, complete*.—A thing is entire, by wanting none of its parts: complete, by wanting none of the appendages that belong to it. A man may have an entire house to himself, and yet not have one complete apartment.

*Surprised, astonished, amazed, confounded*.—I am surprised

with what is new or unexpected ; I am astonished at what is vast or great ; I am amazed at what is incomprehensible ; I am confounded by what is shocking or terrible.

*Tranquillity, peace, calm.*—Tranquillity, respects a situation free from trouble, considered in itself ; peace, the same situation with respect to any causes that might interrupt it ; calm, with regard to a disturbed situation going before or following it. A good man enjoys tranquillity, in himself ; peace, with others ; and calm, after the storm.

These are some of the numerous instances of words, in our language, whose significations approach, but are not precisely the same. The more the distinction in the meaning of such words is attended to, the more clearly and forcibly shall we speak or write. It may not, on all occasions, be necessary to pay a great deal of attention to very nice distinctions ; yet the foregoing instances show the utility of some general care to understand the distinct import of our words,

While we are attending to precision, we must be on our guard, lest, from the desire of pruning too closely, we retrench all copiousness. Scarcely in any language are there two words that convey precisely the same idea ; a person thoroughly conversant in the propriety of the language, will always be able to observe something that distinguishes them. As they are like different shades of the same colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by using them so as to heighten and complete the object which he presents to us. He supplies by one what was wanting in the other, to the strength, or to the finishing of the image which he means to exhibit. But, for this purpose, he must be attentive to the choice of his words, and not employ them carelessly, merely for the sake of filling up a period, or of rounding and diversifying his language, as if their signification were exactly the same, while in truth it is not. To unite copiousness and precision, to be full and easy, and at the same time correct and exact in the choice of every word, is no doubt one of the highest and most difficult attainments in writing.



## PART II.

*Of Perspicuity and Accuracy of Expression with respect to the Construction of Sentences.*

SENTENCES, in general, should neither be very long, nor very short: long ones require close attention to make us clearly perceive the connexion of the several parts; and short ones are apt to break the sense, and weaken the connexion of thought. Yet occasionally they may both be used with force and propriety; as may be seen in the following sentences.

“ If you look about you, and consider the lives of others as well as your own; if you think how few are born with honour, and how many die without name or children; how little beauty we see, and how few friends we hear of; how much poverty, and how many diseases there are in the world; you will fall down upon your knees, and instead of repining at one affliction, will admire so many blessings which you have received from the Divine hand.” This is a sentence composed of several members linked together, and hanging upon one another, so that the sense of the whole is not brought out till the close. The following is an example of one in which the sense is formed into short, independent propositions, each complete within itself. “ I confess, it was want of consideration that made me an author. I wrote, because it amused me. I corrected, because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write. I published, because I was told I might please such as it was a credit to please.”

A long succession of either long or short sentences should be avoided; for the ear tires of either of them when too long continued. Whereas, by a proper mixture of long and short periods, not only the ear is gratified, but animation and force are given to our style.

We now proceed to consider the things most essential to an accurate and perfect sentence. They appear to be the

four following: 1. **CLEARNESS.** 2. **UNITY.** 3. **STRENGTH.** 4. **A JUDICIOUS USE OF THE FIGURES OF SPEECH.**

## CHAPTER I.

### *Of the CLEARNESS of a SENTENCE.*

PURITY, propriety, and precision, in words and phrases separately considered, have already been explained, and shown to be necessary to perspicuous and accurate writing. The just relation of sentences, and the parts of sentences, to one another, and the due arrangement of the whole, are the subjects which remain to be discussed.

THE FIRST requisite of a perfect sentence is *Clearness*.

Whatever leaves the mind in any sort of suspense as to the meaning, ought to be avoided. Obscurity arises from two causes; either from a wrong choice of words, or a wrong arrangement of them. The choice of words and phrases, as far as regards perspicuity, has been already considered. The disposition of them comes now under consideration.

The first thing to be studied here, is grammatical propriety. But as the grammar of our language is not comparatively extensive, there may be an obscure order of words, where there is no transgression of any grammatical rule. The relations of words, or members of a period, are, with us, ascertained only by the position in which they stand.

Hence a capital rule in the arrangement of sentences is, that the words or members, most nearly related, should be placed in the sentence as near to each other as possible, so as to make their mutual relation clearly appear. It will be proper to produce some instances, in order to show the importance of this rule.

1. *In the position of adverbs.* “The Romans understood liberty, *at least*, as well as we.” These words are capable of two different senses, according as the emphasis, in reading them, is laid upon *liberty*, or upon *at least*. The words should have been thus arranged: “The Romans understood liberty as well, at least, as we.”



“Theism can only be opposed to polytheism, or atheism.” Is it meant that theism is capable of nothing else besides being opposed to polytheism, or atheism? This is what the words literally import, through the wrong placing of the adverb *only*. It should have been, “Theism can be opposed only to polytheism, or atheism.”

“By the pleasures of the imagination, I mean only such pleasures as arise originally from sight.” When it is said, “*I mean only such pleasures,*” it may be remarked, that the adverb *only* is not properly placed. It is not intended here to qualify the word *mean*, but *such pleasures*; and therefore should have been placed in as close connexion as possible with the word which it limits or qualifies. The style becomes more clear and neat, when the words are arranged thus: “By the pleasures of the imagination, I mean such pleasures only as arise from sight.”

In the following sentence, the word *more* is not in its proper place. “There is not, perhaps, any real beauty or deformity *more* in one piece of matter than another.” The phrase ought to have stood thus: “Beauty or deformity in one piece of matter more than in another.”

## 2. In the position of circumstances, and of particular members.

An author, in his dissertation on parties, thus expresses himself: “Are these designs which any man, who is born a Briton, in any circumstances, in any situation, ought to be ashamed or afraid to avow?” Here we are left at a loss, whether these words, “in any circumstances, in any situation,” are connected with “a man born in Britain, in any circumstances or situation,” or with that man’s “avowing his designs in any circumstances or situation into which he may be brought.” As it is probable that the latter was intended, the arrangement ought to have been conducted thus: “Are these designs which any man, who is born a Briton, ought to be ashamed or afraid, in any situation, in any circumstances, to avow.”

The following is another instance of a wrong arrangement

of circumstances. “A great stone that I happened to find, after a long search, by the sea-shore, served me for an anchor.” One would think that the search was confined to the sea-shore; but as the meaning is, that the great stone was found by the sea-shore, the period ought to have run thus: “A great stone, that, after a long search, I happened to find by the sea-shore, served me for an anchor.”

It is a rule, too, never to crowd many circumstances together, but rather to intersperse them in different parts of the sentence, joined with the principal words on which they depend. For instance: “What I had the opportunity of mentioning to my friend, sometime ago, in conversation, was not a new thought.” These two circumstances, “*sometime ago*,” and “*in conversation*,” which are here put together, would have had a better effect disjoined, thus: “What I had the opportunity, sometime ago, of mentioning to my friend, in conversation, was not a new thought.”

Here follows an example of the wrong arrangement of a member of a sentence. “The minister of state who grows less by his elevation, like a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal, will always have his jealousy strong about him.” Here, so far as can be gathered from the arrangement, it is doubtful whether the object introduced by way of simile relates to what goes before, or to what follows. The ambiguity is removed by the following order. “The minister of state who, like a little statue placed on a mighty pedestal, grows less by his elevation, will always,” &c.

Words expressing things connected in the thought, ought to be placed as near together as possible, even when their separation would convey no ambiguity. This will be seen in the following passages from Addison. “For the English are naturally faulciful, and very often disposed, by that gloominess and melancholy of temper, which is so frequent in our nation, to many wild actions and extravagancies, to which others are not so liable.” Here the verb or assertion is, by a pretty long circumstance, separated from the subject to which it refers. This might have been easily prevented, by placing the circumstance before the verb, thus: “For



the English are naturally fanciful, and, by that gloominess and melancholy of temper which is so frequent in our nation, are often disposed to many wild notions," &c.

"For as no mortal author, in the ordinary fate and vicissitude of things, knows to what use his works may, some time or other, be applied," &c. Better thus: "For as, in the ordinary fate and vicissitude of things, no mortal author knows to what use, some time or other, his works may be applied," &c.

From these examples, the following observation will occur: that a circumstance ought never to be placed between two capital members of a period; but either between the parts of the member to which it belongs, or in such a manner as will confine it to its proper member. When the sense admits it, the sooner a circumstance is introduced, generally speaking, the better, that the more important and significant words may possess the last place, quite disencumbered. The following sentence is, in this respect, faulty. "The Emperour was so intent on the establishment of his absolute power in Hungary, that he exposed the empire doubly to desolation and ruin for the sake of it." Better thus: "That, for the sake of it, he exposed the empire doubly to desolation and ruin."

This appears to be a proper place to observe, that when different things have an obvious relation to each other, in respect to the order of nature or time, that order should be regarded, in assigning them their places in the sentence; unless the scope of the passage require it to be varied. The conclusion of the following lines is inaccurate in this respect. "But still there will be such a mixture of delight, as is proportioned to the degree in which any one of these qualifications is most conspicuous and prevailing." The order in which the two last words are placed, should have been reversed, and made to stand, *prevailing* and *conspicuous*.—They are *conspicuous*, because they *prevail*.

The following sentence is a beautiful example of strict conformity to the rule above mentioned. "Our fight fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with

its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired or fatigued with its proper enjoyments." This passage follows the order of nature. First, we have the variety of objects mentioned, which first furnishes to the mind; next, we have the action of sight on those objects; and lastly, we have the time and continuance of its action. No order could be more natural or exact.

The order which we now recommend, is in single words especially, frequently violated, for the sake of better sound; but, perhaps, in no instances, without a deviation from the line of strict propriety.

3. *In the disposition of the relative pronouns, who, which, what, whose, and of all those particles which express the connexion of the parts of speech with one another.*

A small error in the position of these words may cloud the meaning of the whole sentence; and even where the meaning is intelligible, we always find something awkward and disjointed in the structure of the sentence, when these relatives are out of their proper place. "This kind of wit," says an author, "was very much in vogue among *our countrymen*, about an age or two ago, *who* did not practise it for any oblique reason, but purely for the sake of being witty." We are at no loss about the meaning here; but the construction would evidently be mended by disposing of the circumstance, "about an age or two ago," in such a manner as not to separate the relative *who* from its antecedent *our countrymen*; in this way: "About an age or two ago, this kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, who did not practise it," &c.

The following passage is still more censurable. "It is folly to pretend to arm ourselves against the accidents of life, by heaping up treasures, *which* nothing can protect us against, but the good providence of our Creator." *Which* always refers grammatically to the substantive immediately preceding; and that, in the instance just mentioned, is "treasures." The sentence ought to have stood thus: "It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treasures, to arm



ourselves against the accidents of life, which nothing can protect us against." &c.

With regard to relatives, it may be farther observed, that obscurity often arises from the too frequent repetition of them, particularly of the pronouns *who* and *they*, and *them* and *theirs*, when we have occasion to refer to different persons; as in the following sentence of Tillotson. "Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their reputation obscures them, and their commendable qualities stand in their light; and therefore they do what they can to cast a cloud over them, that the bright shining of their virtues may not obscure them." This is altogether careless writing. When we find these personal pronouns crowding too fast upon us, we have often no method left, but to throw the whole sentence into some other form, which may avoid those frequent references to persons who have before been mentioned.

To have the relation of every word and member of a sentence marked in the most proper and distinct manner, not only gives clearness to it, but makes the mind pass smoothly and agreeably along all the parts of it.

## CHAPTER II.

### *Of the UNITY of a SENTENCE.*

THE SECOND requisite of a perfect sentence is its *Unity*.

In every composition, there is always some connecting principle among the parts. Some one object must reign and be predominant. But most of all, in a single sentence, is required the strictest unity. For the very nature of a sentence implies that one proposition is expressed. It may consist of parts, indeed, but these parts must be so closely bound together, as to make the impression upon the mind, of one object, not of many. To preserve this unity of a sentence, the following rules must be observed.

1. In the *first* place, *During the course of the sentence, the scene should be changed as little as possible.* We should not be hurried by sudden transitions from person to person, nor

from subject to subject. There is commonly, in every sentence, some person or thing which is the governing word. This should be continued so, if possible, from the beginning to the end of it.

The following sentence varies from this rule. “After we came to anchor, they put me on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, who received me with the greatest kindness.” In this sentence, though the objects contained in it have a sufficient connexion with each other, yet, by this manner of representing them, by shifting so often both the place and the person, *we* and *they*, and *I* and *who*, they appear in such a disunited view, that the sense of connexion is much impaired. The sentence is restored to its proper unity, by turning it after the following manner. “Having come to an anchor, I was put on shore, where I was welcomed by all my friends, and received with the greatest kindness.”

Here follows another instance of departure from the rule. “The sultan being dangerously wounded, they carried him to his tent; and, upon hearing of the defeat of his troops, they put him into a litter, which transported him to a place of safety, at the distance of about fifteen leagues.” Better thus: “The Sultan being dangerously wounded, was carried to his tent; and, on hearing of the defeat of his troops, put into a litter, and transported to a place of safety about fifteen leagues distant.”

*A second rule under the head of unity, is, Never to crowd into one sentence, things which have so little connexion, that they could bear to be divided into two or three sentences.*

The violation of this rule tends so much to perplex and obscure, that it is safer to err by too many short sentences, than by one that is overloaded and embarrassed. Examples abound in authors. “Archbishop Tillotson,” says an author, “died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved by King William and Queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, Bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him.” Who would expect the latter part of this sentence to follow in conse-



quence of the former? “He was exceedingly beloved by both king and queen,” is the proposition of the sentence. We look for some proof of this, or at least something related to it to follow; when we are on a sudden carried off to a new proposition.

The following sentence is still worse. The author, speaking of the Greeks under Alexander, says: “Their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unfavoury, by reason of their continual feeding upon sea-fish.” Here the scene is changed upon us again and again. The march of the Greeks, the description of the inhabitants through whose country they travelled, the account of their sheep, and the cause of their sheep being ill-tasted food, form a jumble of objects, slightly related to each other, which the reader cannot, without much difficulty, comprehend under one view.

These examples have been taken from sentences of no great length, yet over-crowded. Writers who deal in long sentences, are very apt to be faulty in this article. Take, for an instance, the following from Temple. “The usual acceptation takes profit and pleasure for two different things, and not only calls the followers or votaries of them by the several names of busy and idle men; but distinguishes the faculties of the mind, that are conversant about them, calling the operations of the first, *Wisdom*; and of the other, *Wit*; which is a Saxon word, used to express what the Spaniards and Italians call *Ingenio*, and the French *Esprit*, both from the Latin; though I think wit more particularly signifies that of poetry, as may occur in remarks on the Runic language.” When one arrives at the end of such a puzzled sentence, he is surprised to find himself got to so great a distance from the object with which he at first set out.

Long, involved, and intricate sentences, are great blemishes in composition. In writers of considerable correctness, we find a period sometimes running out so far, and comprehending so many particulars, as to be more properly a dis-

course than a sentence. An author, speaking of the progress of our language after the time of Cromwell, runs on in this manner: "To this succeeded that licentiousness which entered with the Restoration, and, from infecting our religion and morals, fell to corrupt our language; which last was not like to be much improved by those who at that time made up the court of King Charles the Second; either such as had followed him in his banishment, or who had been altogether conversant in the dialect of these times, or young men who had been educated in the same country: so that the court which used to be the standard of correctness and propriety of speech, was then, and I think has ever since continued, the worst school in England for that accomplishment; and so will remain, till better care be taken in the education of our nobility, that they may set out into the world with some foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeness."

The author, in place of a sentence, has here given a loose dissertation upon several subjects. How many different facts, reasonings, and observations, are here presented to the mind at once! and yet so linked together by the author, that they all make parts of a sentence, which admits of no greater division in pointing, than a colon between any of its members.

It may be of use here to give a specimen of a long sentence, broken down into several periods; by which we shall more clearly perceive the disadvantages of long sentences, and how easily they may be amended. Here follows the sentence in its original form.

"Though in yesterday's paper we showed how every thing that is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure, we must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the necessary cause of this pleasure, because we know neither the nature of an idea, nor the substance of a human soul; and therefore, for want of such a light, all that we can do, in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on those operations of the soul that are most agreeable; and to range, under their proper heads, what is pleas-



ing or displeasing to the mind, without being able to trace out the several necessary and efficient causes, from whence the pleasure or displeasure arises."

The following amendment, besides breaking down the period into several sentences, exhibits some other useful alterations.

"In yesterday's paper, we have shown that every thing which is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure. We must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the efficient cause of this pleasure, because we know not the nature either of an idea, or of the human soul. All that we can do, therefore, in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on the operations of the soul which are most agreeable, and to range under proper heads what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind."

A *third* rule for preserving the unity of sentences, is, *to keep clear of all unnecessary parentheses.*

On some occasions, when the sense is not too long suspended by them, and when they are introduced in a proper place, they may add both to the vivacity and to the energy of the sentence. But for the most part their effect is extremely bad; being a sort of wheels within wheels, sentences in the midst of sentences, the perplexed method of disposing of some thought, which a writer wants judgment to introduce in its proper place.

The parenthesis in this sentence, is striking and proper:

"And was the ransom paid? It was; and paid

"(What can exalt the bounty more?) for thee."

But in the following sentence, we become sensible of an impropriety in the use of it. "If your hearts secretly reproach you for the wrong choice you have made, (as there is time for repentance and retreat; and a return to wisdom is always honourable,) bethink yourselves that the evil is not irreparable." It would be much better to express in a separate sentence, the thoughts contained in this parenthesis; thus: "If your hearts secretly reproach you for the wrong choice you have made, bethink yourselves that the evil is

not irreparable. Still there is time for repentance and retreat; and a return to wisdom is always honourable."

### CHAPTER III.

#### *Of the STRENGTH of a SENTENCE.*

THE THIRD requisite of a perfect sentence, is, *Strength*.

By this is meant such a disposition and management of the several words and members, as shall bring out the sense to the best advantage, and give every word, and every member, its due weight and force.

A sentence may be clear, it may also be compact in all its parts, or have the requisite unity, and yet, by some circumstance in the structure, it may fail in that strength of impression, which a better management would have produced.

The *first* rule for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, *to prune it of all redundant words and members.*

It is a general maxim, that any words which do not add some importance to the meaning of a sentence, always injure it. Care should therefore be exercised with respect to synonymous words, expletives, circumlocutions, tautologies, and the expression of unnecessary circumstances. The attention becomes remiss, when words are multiplied without a corresponding multiplication of ideas. "Content with deserving a triumph, he refused the honour of it;" is better language than to say, "Being content with deserving," &c.

"In the Attic commonwealth," says an author, "it was the privilege and birthright of every citizen and poet, to rail aloud and in public." Better simply thus: "In the Attic commonwealth, it was the privilege of every citizen to rail in public."

Another expresses himself thus: "They returned back again to the same city from whence they came forth;" instead of, "They returned to the city whence they came." The five words, *back, again, same, from, and forth*, are mere expletives, that have neither use nor beauty, and are therefore to be regarded as encumbrances.



“ I am honestly, seriously, and unalterably of opinion, that nothing can possibly be more incurably and emphatically destructive, or more decisively fatal, to a kingdom, than the introduction of thoughtless dissipation, and the pomp of lazy luxury.” Would not the full import of this noisy sentence be better expressed thus: “ I am of opinion, that nothing is more ruinous to a kingdom, than luxury and dissipation ?”

Some writers use much circumlocution in expressing their ideas. A considerable one, for so very simple a thing as a man’s wounding himself, says, “ To mangle, or wound, his outward form and constitution, his natural limbs or body.”

But, on some occasions, circumlocution has a peculiar force; as in the following sentence: “ Shall not *the Judge of all the earth* do right ?”

In the sentences which follow, the ill effects of tautology appear.

“ So it is, that I must be *forced* to get home, partly by stealth, and partly by *force*.”

“ Never did Atticus succeed better in gaining the *universal* love and esteem of *all* men.”

The subsequent sentence contains several unnecessary circumstances. “ On receiving this information, he arose, went out, saddled his horse, mounted him, and rode to town.” All is implied in saying, “ On receiving this information, he rode to town.”

This manner, however, in a certain degree, is so strongly characteristic of the simple style of remote ages, that in books of the highest antiquity, particularly the Bible, it is not at all ungraceful. Of this kind are the following scriptural phrases. “ He lifted up his voice, and wept.” “ He opened his mouth, and said.” It is true, that, in strictness, they are not necessary to the narration, but they are of some importance to the composition, as bearing the venerable signature of ancient simplicity. It may, on this occasion, be further observed, that the language of the present translation of the Bible ought not to be viewed in an exceptionable light, though some parts of it may appear to

be obsolete. From universal admission, this language has become so familiar and intelligible, that in all transcripts and allusions, except where the sense is evidently injured, it ought to be carefully preserved. And it may also be justly remarked, that, on religious subjects, a frequent recurrence of scripture-language is attended with peculiar force and propriety.

Though it promotes the strength of a sentence, to contract a round about method of expression, and to lop off useless excrescences, yet we should avoid the extreme of pruning too closely: some leaves should be left to shelter and surround the fruit. Even synonymous expressions may on some occasions be used with propriety. One is, when an obscure term, which we cannot well avoid employing, needs to be explained by one that is clearer. The other is, when the language of the emotions is exhibited. Emotion naturally dwells on its object: and when the reader also feels interested, repetition and synonymy have frequently an agreeable effect.

The following passage, taken from Addison, who delighted in a full and flowing style, may, by some persons, be deemed not very exceptionable. “But there is nothing that makes its way more directly to the soul than beauty, which immediately diffuses a secret satisfaction and complacency through the imagination, and gives a finishing to any thing that is great or uncommon. The very first discovery of it strikes the mind with inward joy, and spreads a cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties.” Some degree of verbosity may be discovered in these sentences, as phrases are repeated which seem little more than the echo of one another; such as—*diffusing satisfaction and complacency through the imagination—striking the mind with inward joy—spreading cheerfulness and delight through all its faculties*. But, perhaps, some redundancy is more allowable on such lively subjects, than it would be on some other occasions.

After removing superfluities, the *second* rule for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, *to attend particularly to the*



*use of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed for transition and connexion.*

These little words *but, and, or, which, whose, where, then, therefore, because, &c.* are frequently the most important words of any; they are the joints or hinges upon which all sentences turn, and, of course, much of their strength must depend upon such particles. The varieties in using them are, indeed, so many, that no particular system of rules respecting them can be given. Some observations, tending to illustrate the rule, may, however, be mentioned.

What is called *splitting particles*, or separating a preposition from the noun which it governs, is to be avoided. As if I should say, "Though virtue borrows no assistance from, yet it may often be accompanied by, the advantages of fortune." Here, we are put to a stand in thought, being obliged to rest a little on the preposition by itself, which, at the same time, carries no significance, till it is joined to its proper substantive.

Some writers needlessly multiply demonstrative and relative particles, by the frequent use of such phraseology as this: "There is nothing which disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language." In introducing a subject, or laying down a proposition, to which we demand particular attention, this sort of style is very proper; but, on common occasions, it is better to express ourselves more simply and shortly: "Nothing disgusts us sooner than the empty pomp of language."

Other writers make a practice of omitting the relative, where they think the meaning can be understood without it: as, "The man I love;" "The dominions we possessed, and the conquests we made." But though this elliptical style is intelligible, and is allowable in conversation and epistolary writing, yet, in all writings of a serious and dignified kind, it ought to be avoided. There, the relative should always be inserted in its proper place, and the construction filled up. "The man whom I love." "The dominions which we possessed, and the conquest which we made."

With regard to the copulative particle *and*, which occurs so frequently in all kinds of composition, several observations are to be made. First, It is evident, that the unnecessary repetition of it enfeebles style. The following sentence, from Temple, will serve for an instance. He is speaking of the refinement of the French language: “The academy set up by Cardinal Richelieu, to amuse the wits of that age *and* country, *and* divert them from raking into his politics *and* ministry, brought this into vogue; *and* the French wits have, for this last age, been wholly turned to the refinement of their style *and* language; *and*, indeed, with such success, that it can hardly be equalled, *and* runs equally through their verse *and* their prose.” Here are no fewer than eight *ands* in one sentence. Some writers often make their sentences drag in this manner, by a careless multiplication of copulatives.

But, in the next place, it is worthy of observation, that though the natural use of the conjunction *and* is to join objects together, yet, in fact, by dropping the conjunction, we often mark a closer connexion, a quicker succession of objects, than when it is inserted between them. “I came, I saw, I conquered,” expresses with more force the rapidity and quick succession of conquest, than if connecting particles had been used. See Exodus, xv. 10.

On the other hand, when we seek to prevent a quick transition from one object to another, when we are making some enumeration, in which we wish that the objects should appear as distinct from each other as possible, and that the mind should rest, for a moment, on each object by itself, copulatives may be multiplied with peculiar advantage. As when an author says, “Such a man might fall a victim to power; but truth, and reason, and liberty, would fall with him.” Observe, in the following enumeration made by the Apostle Paul, what additional weight and distinctness are given to each particular, by the repetition of a conjunction.” “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.”



The words designed to mark the transition from one sentence to another, and the connexion between sentences, are sometimes very incorrect, and perform their office in an imperfect and obscure manner. The following is an example of this kind of inaccuracy. "By greatness, I do not mean the bulk of any single object only, but the largeness of a whole view. *Such* are the prospects of an open champaign country, a vast uncultivated desert," &c. The word *such* signifies of that nature or quality, which necessarily presupposes some adjective, or word descriptive of a quality going before, to which it refers. But, in the foregoing sentence, there is no such adjective. The author had spoken of *greatness* in the abstract only; and, therefore, *such* has no distinct antecedent to which we can refer it. The sentence would have been introduced with more propriety, by saying, *To this class belong, or under this head are ranged, the prospects, &c.*

As connective particles are the hinges, tacks, and pins, by which the words in the same clause, the clauses in the same member, the members in the same sentence, and even the sentences in the same discourse, are united together, and their relations suggested, so they should not be either too frequently repeated, awkwardly exposed to view, or made up of polysyllables, when shorter would as well convey our meaning. *Notwithstanding that, inasmuch that, inasmuch as, furthermore, &c.* are tedious words, which tend to overload and perplex a sentence.

We shall conclude this head with two remarks on the subject of inserting or omitting the conjunctions. The first is, that the illative conjunctions, the causal, and the disjunctive, when they suit the sense, can more rarely be dispensed with than the copulative. The second is, that the omission of copulatives always succeeds best, when the connexion of the thoughts is either very close or very distant. It is mostly in the intermediate cases that the conjunction is deemed necessary. When the connexion in thought is very distant, the copulative appears absurd; and when very close, superfluous.

The *third* rule for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, *to dispose of the capital word, or words, so that they may make the greatest impression.*

That there are, in every sentence, such capital words, on which the meaning principally rests, every one must see; and that these words should possess a conspicuous and distinguished place, is equally plain. For the most part, with us, the important words are placed in the beginning of the sentence. So in the following passages: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I unto thee," &c. "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

Sometimes, however, when we intend to give weight to a sentence, it is of advantage to suspend the meaning for a little, and then bring it out full at the close. "Thus," says an author, "on whatever side we contemplate this ancient writer, what principally strikes us, is his wondrous invention."

To accomplish this end, the placing of capital words in a conspicuous part of the sentence, the natural order of our language must sometimes be inverted. According to this natural order, the nominative has the first place, the verb the second, and the objective, if it be an active verb that is employed, has the third. Circumstances follow the nominative, the verb, or the objective, as they happen to belong to any of them. "Diana of the Ephesians is great," is the natural order of the sentence. But its strength is increased by inversion, thus: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." "I profess, in the sincerity of my heart," &c. is the natural order of a circumstance. Inverted, thus: "In the sincerity of my heart, I profess," &c.

Some authors greatly invert the natural order of sentences; others write mostly in a natural style. Each method has its advantages. The inverted, possesses strength, dignity, and variety: the other, more nature, ease, and simplicity. We shall give an instance of each method, taken from writers of considerable eminence. The first is of the inverted order. The author is speaking of the misery of vice. "This, as to the complete immoral state,



is, what of their own accord, men readily remark. Where there is this absolute degeneracy, this total apostacy from all candour, truth, or equity, there are few who do not see and acknowledge the misery which is consequent. Seldom is the case misconstrued, when at worst. The misfortune is, that we look not on this depravity, nor consider how it stands, in less degrees. As if, to be absolutely moral, were, indeed, the greatest misery; but to be so in a little degree, should be no misery or harm at all. Which, to allow, is just as reasonable as to own, that it is the greatest ill of a body to be in the utmost manner maimed or distorted, but that to lose the use only of one limb, or to be impaired in some single organ or member, is no ill worthy the least notice." Here is no violence done to the language, though there are many inversions.

The following is an example of natural construction. "Our sight is the most perfect, and most delightful of all our senses. It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action, without being tired, or satiated with its proper enjoyments. The sense of feeling can, indeed, give us a notion of extension, shape, and all other ideas that enter at the eye, except colours; but at the same time, it is very much straitened and confined in its operations," &c.

But, whether we use inversion or not, and in whatever part of the sentence we dispose of the capital words, it is always a point of consequence, that these capital words should stand clear and disentangled from any other words that would clog them. Thus, when there are any circumstances of time, place, or other limitations, which the principal object of our sentence requires to have connected with it, we must take care to dispose of them, so as not to cloud that principal object, nor to bury it under a load of circumstances. This will be made clearer by an example. "If, whilst they profess only to please, they secretly advise, and give instruction, they may now, perhaps, as well as formerly, be esteemed, with justice, the best and most ho-

honourable among authors." This is a well constructed sentence. It contains a great many circumstances and adverbs, necessary to qualify the meaning; *only, secretly, as well, perhaps, now, with justice, formerly*; yet these are placed so properly, as neither to embarrass, nor weaken the sentence; while that which is the capital object in it, viz. "being justly esteemed the best and most honourable among authors," comes out in the conclusion clear and detached, and possesses its proper place. See, now, what would have been the effect of a different arrangement: "If, whilst they profess to please only, they advise and give instruction secretly, they may be esteemed the best and most honourable among authors, with justice, perhaps, now as well as formerly." Here we have precisely the same words, and the same sense; but, by means of the circumstances being so intermingled as to clog the capital words, the whole becomes feeble and perplexed.

The *fourth* rule for promoting the strength of sentences, is, *that a weaker assertion or proposition should never come after a stronger one; and that, when our sentence consists of two members, the longer should, generally, be the concluding one.*

Thus: to say, "When our passions have forsaken us, we flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken them," is both more easy and more clear, than to begin with the longer part of the proposition: "We flatter ourselves with the belief that we have forsaken our passions, when they have forsaken us."

In general, it is agreeable to find a sentence rising upon us, and growing in its importance to the very last word, when this construction can be managed without affectation. "If we rise yet higher," says Addison, "and consider the fixed stars as so many oceans of flame, that are each of them attended with a different set of planets; and still discover new firmaments and new lights, that are sunk farther in those unfathomable depths of æther; we are lost in such a labyrinth of suns and worlds, and confounded with the magnificence and immensity of nature."



The *fifth* rule for the strength of sentences, is, *to avoid concluding them with an adverb, a preposition, or any inconsiderable word.*

Agreeably to this rule, we should not conclude with any of the particles, *of, to, from, with, by.* For instance, it is a great deal better to say, "Avarice is a crime of which wise men are often guilty," than to say, "Avarice is a crime which wise men are often guilty of." This is a phraseology which all correct writers shun; and with reason. For as the mind cannot avoid resting a little, on the import of the word which closes the sentence, it must be disagreeable to be left pausing on a word, which does not, by itself, produce any idea.

For the same reason, verbs which are used in a compound sense, with some of these prepositions, are, though not so bad, yet still not so proper conclusions of a period; such as, *bring about, lay hold of, come over to, clear up,* and many other of this kind: instead of which, if we can employ a simple verb, it always terminates the sentence with more strength. Even the pronoun *it* should, if possible, be avoided in the conclusion; more especially when it is joined with some of the prepositions; as, *with it, in it, to it.* We shall be sensible of this in the following sentence. "There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion, than this, of the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period *in it.*" How much more agreeable the sentence, if it had been so constructed as to close with the word *period!*

Besides particles and pronouns, any phrase, which expresses a circumstance only, always appears badly in the rear of a sentence. We may judge of this by the following passage: "Let me therefore conclude by repeating, that division has caused all the mischief we lament; that union alone can retrieve it; and that a great advance towards this union, was the coalition of parties, so happily begun, so successfully carried on, and of late so unaccountably neglected; to say no worse." This last phrase, "to say no

worse," occasions a falling off at the end. The proper disposition of such circumstances in a sentence, requires attention, in order to adjust them so as shall consist equally with the perspicuity and the strength of the period. Though necessary parts, they are, however, like irregular stones in a building, which try the skill of an artist, where to place them with the least offence. But it must be remembered, that the close is always an unsuitable place for them. Notwithstanding what has been said against concluding a period with an adverb, &c. this must not be understood to refer to such words, when the stress and significance of the sentence rest chiefly upon them. In this case, they are not to be considered as circumstances, but as the principal objects; as in the following sentence. "In their prosperity, my friends shall never hear of me; in their adversity, always." Here, "*never*" and "*always*" being emphatical words, were to be so placed as to make a strong impression.

The *sixth* rule relating to the strength of a sentence, is, *that, in the members of a sentence, where two things are compared or contrasted with one another; where either a resemblance or an opposition is intended to be expressed; some resemblance, in the language and construction, should be preferred. For when the things themselves correspond to each other, we naturally expect to find a similar correspondence in the words.*

Thus: When it is said, "The wise man is happy when he gains his own approbation; the fool, when he recommends himself to the applause of those about him;" the opposition would have been more complete, if it had been expressed thus: "The wise man is happy when he gains his own approbation; the fool, when he gains that of others."

"A friend exaggerates a man's virtues; an enemy inflames his crimes." Better thus: "A friend exaggerates a man's virtues; an enemy, his crimes."

The following passage from Pope's Preface to his Homer, fully exemplifies the rule just given: "Homer was the greater genius; Virgil, the better artist: in the one, we

most admire the man; in the other, the work. Homer hurries us with a commanding impetuosity; Virgil leads us with an attractive majesty. Homer scatters with a generous profusion; Virgil bestows with a careful magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a sudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a constant stream."—Periods thus constructed, when introduced with propriety, and not returning too often, have a sensible beauty. But we must beware of carrying our attention to this beauty too far. It ought only to be occasionally studied, when comparison or opposition of objects naturally leads to it. If such a construction as this be aimed at in all our sentences, it leads to a disagreeable uniformity; produces a regularly returning clink in the period, which tires the ear; and plainly discovers affectation.

The *seventh* rule for promoting the strength and effect of sentences, is, *to attend to the harmony and easy flow of the words and members.*

Sound is a quality much inferior to sense; yet such as must not be disregarded. For, as long as sounds are the vehicle of conveyance for our ideas, there will be a very considerable connexion between the idea which is conveyed, and the nature of the sound which conveys it. Pleasing ideas, and forcible reasoning, can hardly be transmitted to the mind, by means of harsh and disagreeable sounds. The observations which we have to make on this subject, respect the choice of words; their arrangement; the order and disposition of the members; and the cadence or close of sentences.

We begin with the choice of words. It is evident, that words are most agreeable to the ear, when they are composed of smooth and liquid sounds, in which there is a proper intermixture of vowels and consonants; without too many harsh consonants rubbing against each other; or too many open vowels in succession, to cause a hiatus, or disagreeable aperture of the mouth.

It may always be assumed as a principle, that whatever



sounds are difficult in pronunciation, are, in the same proportion, harsh and painful to the ear. Vowels give softness; consonants, strength to the sound of words. The melody of language requires a just proportion of each; and it will be hurt, be rendered either grating or effeminate, by an excess of either. Long words are commonly more agreeable to the ear than monosyllables. They please it by the composition, or succession of sounds which they present to it; and, accordingly, the most harmonious languages abound most in them. Among words of any length, those are the most melodious, which do not run wholly either upon long or short syllables, but are composed of an intermixture of them: such as, *repent, produce, wonderful, velocity, celerity, independent, impetuosity.*

If we would speak forcibly and effectually, we must avoid the use of such words as the following: 1. Such as are composed of words already compounded, the several parts of which are not easily, and therefore not closely united: as, “*Unsuccessfulness, wrongheadedness, tenderheartedness:*” 2. Such as have the syllables which immediately follow the accented syllable, crowded with consonants that do not easily coalesce; as, “*Questionless, chroniclers, conventiclers:*” 3. Such as have too many syllables following the accented syllable: as, “*Primarily, cursorily, summarily, peremptoriness:*” 4. Such as have a short or unaccented syllable repeated, or followed by another short or unaccented syllable very much resembling: as, *Holily, sillily,ivolily, farriering.* A little harshness, by the collision of consonants, which, nevertheless, our organs find no difficulty in articulating, and which do not suggest to the hearer the disagreeable idea either of precipitation or of stammering, is by no means a sufficient reason for suppressing a useful term. The words *hedg’d, fledg’d, wedg’d, drudg’d, grudg’d, adjudg’d*, which some have thought very offensive, are not exposed to the objections which lie against the words above mentioned. We should not do well to introduce such hard and strong sounds too frequently; but when they are used sparingly and properly, they have even

a good effect. They contribute to that variety in sound which is advantageous to language.

The next head, respecting the harmony which results from a proper arrangement of words, is a point of greater nicety. For, let the words themselves be ever so well chosen, and well sounding, yet, if they be ill disposed, the melody of the sentence is utterly lost, or greatly impaired. That this is the case, the learners will perceive by the following examples. “Pleasures simple and moderate always are the best: it would be better to say, “simple and moderate pleasures are always the best.” “Office or rank may be the recompense of intrigue, versatility, or flattery;” better thus, “Rank or office may be the recompense of flattery, versatility, or intrigue.” “A great recommendation of the guidance offered by integrity to us, is, that it is by all men easily understood:” better in this form; “It is a great recommendation of the guidance offered to us by integrity, that it is easily understood by all men.” In the following examples, the words are neither selected, nor arranged, so as to produce the most agreeable effect. “If we make the best of our life, it is but as a pilgrimage, with dangers surrounding it;” better thus, “Our life, at the best, is a pilgrimage, and dangers surround it.” “We see that we are encumbered with difficulties, which we cannot prevent:” better, “We perceive ourselves involved in difficulties that cannot be avoided.” “It is plain to any one who views the subject, even slightly, that there is nothing here that is without allay and pure:” improved by this form; “It is evident to the slightest inspection, that nothing here is unallayed and pure.”

We may take, for an instance of a sentence remarkably harmonious, the following from Milton’s *Treatise on Education*: “We shall conduct you to a hill-side, laborious, indeed, at the first ascent; but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.” Every thing in this sentence conspires to promote the harmony. The words are well chosen; full of liquids and soft sounds;

*laborious, smooth, green, goodly, melodious, charming*; and these words so artfully arranged, that, were we to alter the situation of any one of them, we should, presently, be sensible of the melody's suffering.

To promote this harmonious arrangement of words, the following general directions will be found of some use. 1st, When the preceding word ends with a vowel, let the subsequent one begin with a consonant; and *vice versa*. *A true friend, a cruel enemy*, are smoother and easier to the voice, than, *a true union, a cruel destroyer*. But when it is more perspicuous or convenient, for vowels or consonants to end one word and begin the next, it is proper that the vowels be a long and a short one; and that the consonants be either a liquid and a mute, or liquids of different sorts: thus, *a lovely offspring; a purer design; a calm retreat*; are more fluent than, *a happy union, a brief petition, a cheap triumph, a putrid distemper, a calm matron, a clean nurse*. From these examples, the student will perceive the importance of accurately understanding the nature of vowels and consonants, liquids and mutes; with the connexion and influence which subsist amongst them. 2d, In general, a considerable number of long or short words near one another, should be avoided. "Disappointment in our expectations is wretchedness:" better thus; "Disappointed hope is misery." "No course of joy can please us long;" better, "No course of enjoyment can delight us long." A succession of words having the same accent on their syllables, whether it be long or short, should also be avoided. "James was needy, feeble, and fearful:" improved thus; "James was timid, feeble, and destitute." "They could not be happy; for he was silly, peevish, and sullen:" better thus; "They could not be happy; for he was simple, peevish, and gloomy." 3d, Words which begin alike, or end alike, must not come together; and the last syllable of the preceding word, should not be the same as the first syllable of the subsequent one. It is not so pleasing and harmonious to say, "This is a convenient contrivance:" "He is an indulgent parent;" "She behaves with uniform for-



mality;" as, "This is a useful contrivance;" "He is a kind parent;" "She behaves with unvaried formality."

We proceed to consider the members of a sentence, with regard to harmony. They should not be too long, nor disproportionate to each other. When they have a regular and proportional division, they are much easier to the voice, are better remembered, and more clearly understood, than when this rule is not attended to: for whatever tires the voice, and offends the ear, is apt to mar the strength of the expression, and to degrade the sense of the author. And this is a sufficient ground for paying attention to the order and proportion of sentences, and the different parts of which they consist. The following passage exhibits sentences, wherein the different members are proportionally arranged.

Temple, speaking farcassically of man, says, "But his pride is greater than his ignorance, and what he wants in knowledge he supplies by sufficiency. When he has looked about him as far as he can, he concludes there is no more to be seen; when he is at the end of his line, he is at the bottom of the ocean; when he has shot his best, he is sure none ever did, or ever can, shoot better, or beyond it. His own reason he holds to be the certain measure of truth; and his own knowledge, of what is possible in nature." Here every thing is at once easy to the breath, grateful to the ear, and intelligible to the understanding. See another example of the same kind, in the 17th and 18th verses of the 3d chapter of the Prophet Habakkuk. We may remark here, that our present version of the Holy Scriptures, especially of the Psalms of David, abounds with instances of an harmonious arrangement of the words and members of sentences.

In the following quotation from Tillotson, we shall become sensible of an effect very different from that of the preceding sentences. "This discourse, concerning the easiness of the Divine commands, does all along suppose and acknowledge the difficulties of the first entrance upon a religious course; except only in those persons who have had the happiness to be trained up to religion, by the easy and

insensible degrees of a pious and virtuous education." Here there is some degree of harshness and unpleasantness, owing principally to this, that there is properly no more than one pause or rest in the sentence, falling betwixt the two members into which it is divided; each of which is so long as to occasion a considerable stretch of the breath in pronouncing it.

With respect to the cadence or close of a sentence, care should be taken that it be not abrupt, or unpleasant. The following instances may be sufficient to show the propriety of some attention to this part of the rule. "Virtue, diligence, and industry, joined with good temper and prudence, are prosperous in general." It would be better thus; "Virtue, diligence, and industry, joined with good temper and prudence, have ever been found the surest road to prosperity. An author, speaking of the Trinity, expresses himself thus: "It is a mystery which we firmly believe the truth of, and humbly adore the depth of." How much better would it have been by this transposition! "It is a mystery, the truth of which we firmly believe, and the depth of which we humbly adore."

In order to give a sentence this proper close, the longest member of it, and the fullest words, should be reserved to the conclusion. But in the distribution of the members, and in the cadence of the period, as well as in the sentences themselves, variety must be observed; for the mind soon tires with a frequent repetition of the same tone.

Though attention to the words and members, and the close of sentences, must not be neglected, yet it must also be kept within proper bounds. Sense has its own harmony; and in no instance should perspicuity, precision, or strength of sentiment, be sacrificed to sound. All unmeaning words, introduced merely to round the period, or fill up the melody, are great blemishes in writing. They are childish and puerile ornaments, by which a sentence always loses more in point of weight, than it can gain by such additions to its sound.

## CHAPTER IV.

*Of FIGURES of SPEECH.*

THE FOURTH requisite of a perfect sentence, is a judicious use of the Figures of Speech.

As figurative language is to be met with in almost every sentence, and, when properly employed, confers beauty and strength on composition, some knowledge of it appears to be indispensable to the scholars, who are learning to form their sentences with perspicuity, accuracy, and force. We shall, therefore, enumerate the principal figures, and give them some explanation.

In general, Figures of Speech imply some departure from simplicity of expression; the idea which we mean to convey is expressed in a particular manner, and with some circumstance added, which is designed to render the impression more strong and vivid. When I say, for instance, "That a good man enjoys comfort in the midst of adversity;" I just express my thought in the simplest manner possible: But when I say, "To the upright there ariseth light in darkness;" the same sentiment is expressed in a figurative style; a new circumstance is introduced; "light," is put in the place of "comfort," and "darkness" is used to suggest the idea of "adversity." In the same manner, to say, "It is impossible, by any search we can make, to explore the Divine Nature fully," is to make a simple proposition: But when we say, "Canst thou, by searching, find out the Lord? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" this introduces a figure into style; the proposition being not only expressed, but, with it, admiration and astonishment.

But, though figures imply a deviation from what may be reckoned the most simple form of speech, we are not thence to conclude, that they imply any thing uncommon, or unnatural. On many occasions, they are both the most natural, and the most common method of uttering our sentiments. It would be very difficult to compose any dif-



course without using them often ; nay, there are few sentences of considerable length, in which there does not occur some expression that may be termed a figure. This being the case, we may see the necessity of some attention, in order to understand their nature and use.

At the first rise of language, men would begin with giving names to the different objects which they discerned, or thought of. This stock of words would, then, be very small. As men's ideas multiplied, and their acquaintance with objects increased, their store of names and words would also increase. But to the vast variety of objects and ideas, no language is adequate. No language is so copious, as to have a separate word for every separate idea. Men naturally sought to abridge this labour of multiplying words without end ; and, in order to lay less burden on their memories, made one word, which they had already appropriated to a certain idea or object, stand also for some other idea or object, between which and the primary one, they found, or fancied, some relation. The names of sensible objects, were the words most early introduced ; and were, by degrees, extended to those mental objects of which men had more obscure conceptions, and to which they found it more difficult to assign distinct names. They borrowed, therefore, the name of some sensible idea, where their imagination found some affinity. Thus, we speak of a *piercing* judgment, and a *clear* head ; a *soft* or a *hard* heart ; a *rough* or a *smooth* behaviour. We say, *inflamed* by anger, *warmed* by love, *swelled* with pride, *melted* into grief ; and these are almost the only significant words which we have for such ideas.

The principal advantages of figures of speech are the two following.

*First*, They enrich language, and render it more copious. By their means, words and phrases are multiplied for expressing all sorts of ideas ; for describing even the minutest differences ; the nicest shades and colours of thoughts ; which no language could possibly do by proper words alone, without assistance from Tropes.

*Secondly*, They frequently give us a much clearer and

more striking view of the principal object, than we could have, if it were expressed in simple terms, and divested of its accessory idea. By a well chosen figure, even conviction is assisted, and the impression of a truth upon the mind, made more lively and forcible than it would otherwise be. We perceive this in the following illustration of Young: "When we dip too deep in pleasure, we always stir a sediment that renders it impure and noxious:" and in this instance: "A heart boiling with violent passions, will always send up infatuating fumes to the head." An image that presents so much congruity between a moral and a sensible idea, serves, like an argument from analogy, to enforce what the author asserts, and to induce belief.

Having considered the general nature of figures, we proceed next to particularize such of them as are of the most importance; viz. Metaphor, Allegory, Comparison, Metonymy, Synecdoche, Personification, Apostrophe, Antithesis, Interrogation, Exclamation, and Amplification or Climax.

A *Metaphor* is a figure founded entirely on the resemblance which one object bears to another. Hence, it is much allied to simile or comparison; and is indeed no other than a comparison, expressed in an abridged form. When I say of some great minister, "That he upholds the state, like a pillar which supports the weight of a whole edifice," I fairly make a comparison: But when I say of such a minister, "That he is the pillar of the state," it now becomes a metaphor. In the latter case, the comparison betwixt the minister and a pillar is made in the mind; but it is expressed without any of the words that denote comparison.

The following are examples of metaphor taken from Scripture: "I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." "Thou art my rock and my fortress." "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path."

Rules to be observed in the use of metaphors.

1. *Metaphors, as well as other figures, should, on no occasion, be stuck on profusely; and should always be such as accord with the strain of our sentiment.* The latter part of the

following passage, from a late historian, is, in this respect, very exceptionable. He is giving an account of the famous act of parliament against irregular marriages in England. "The bill," says he, "underwent a great number of alterations and amendments, which were not effected without violent contest. At length, however, it was floated through both houses on the tide of a great majority, and steered into the safe harbour of royal approbation."

2. Care should be taken that *the resemblance, which is the foundation of the metaphor, be clear and perspicuous, not far-fetched, nor difficult to discover.* The transgression of this rule makes what are called harsh or forced metaphors; which are displeasing, because they puzzle the reader, and, instead of illustrating the thought, render it perplexed and intricate.

3. In the third place, it must be carefully attended to, in the conduct of metaphors, *never to jumble metaphorical and plain language together.* An author, addressing himself to the king, says:

To thee the world its present homage pays :  
'The *har-vest* early, but mature the *praise*.

It is plain, that, had not the rhyme misled him to the choice of an improper phrase, he would have said,

The *har-vest* early, but mature the *crop*;

and so would have continued the figure which he had begun. Whereas, by dropping it unfinished, and by employing the literal word "praise," when we were expecting something that related to the harvest, the figure is broken, and the two members of the sentence have no suitable correspondence to each other.

4. We should avoid making two inconsistent metaphors meet on one object. This is what is called *mixed metaphor*, and is indeed one of the greatest misapplications of this figure. One may be "*sheltered* under the patronage of a great man;" "but it would be wrong to say, "*sheltered* under the mask of dissimulation;" as a mask conceals, but does not shelter. Addison, in his letter from Italy, says:



I *bridle* in my struggling muse with pain,  
That longs to *launch* into a bolder strain.

The muse, figured as a horse, may be bridled; but when we speak of launching, we make it a ship; and, by no force of imagination, can it be supposed both a horse and a ship at one moment; *bridled*, to hinder it from *launching*.

The same author, elsewhere, says, “There is not a single view of human nature, which is not sufficient to *extinguish* the seeds of pride.” Observe the incoherence of the things here joined together; making a view *extinguish*, and *extinguish seeds*.

As metaphors ought never to be mixed, so they should not be crowded together on the same object: for the mind has difficulty in passing readily through many different views given it, in quick succession, of the same object.

The *last* rule concerning metaphors, is, *that they be not too far pursued*. If the resemblance, on which the figure is founded, be long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumstances, we tire the reader, who soon grows weary of this stretch of fancy; and we render our discourse obscure. This is called, *straining a metaphor*. Authors of a lively and strong imagination are apt to run into this exuberance of metaphor. When they hit upon a figure that pleases them, they are loth to part with it, and frequently continue it so long, as to become tedious and intricate. We may observe, for instance, how the following metaphor is spun out.

Thy thoughts are vagabonds; all outward bound,  
’Midst sands, and rocks, and storms, to cruize for pleasure;  
If gain’d, dear bought; and better mis’d than gain’d.  
Fancy and Sense, from an infected shore,  
Thy cargo brings; and pestilence the prize;  
Then such the thirst, insatiable thirst,  
By fond indulgence but inflam’d the more;  
Fancy still cruizes, when poor Sense is tired.

An *Allegory* may be regarded as a metaphor continued; since it is the representation of some one thing by another

that resembles it, and which is made to stand for it. We may take from the Scriptures a very fine example of an allegory, in the 80th psalm; where the people of Israel are represented under the image of a vine; and the figure is carried throughout with great exactness and beauty. “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it: Thou preparedst room before it; and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it; and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs into the sea, and her branches into the river. Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of Hosts, look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine!” See also Ezekiel, xvii. 22,—24.

The first and principal requisite in the conduct of an allegory, is, *that the figurative and the literal meaning be not mixed inconsistently together.* Indeed, all the rules that were given for metaphors, may also be applied to allegories, on account of the affinity they bear to each other. The only material difference between them, besides the one being short, and the other being prolonged, is, that a metaphor always explains itself by the words that are connected with it in their proper and natural meaning: as, when I say, “Achilles was a lion;” “An able minister is the pillar of the state;” the “lion” and the “pillar” are sufficiently interpreted by the mention of “Achilles” and the “minister,” which I join to them; but an allegory is, or may be, allowed to stand less connected with the literal meaning, the interpretation not being so directly pointed out, but left to our own reflection.

Allegory was a favourite method of delivering instructions in ancient times: for what we call fables or parables are no other than allegories. By words and actions attributed to beasts or inanimate objects, the dispositions of men were figured; and what we call the moral, is the unfigured sense or meaning of the allegory.

A *Comparison* or *Simile*, is, when the resemblance between two objects is *expressed in form*, and generally pursued more fully than the nature of a metaphor admits; as when it is said, “The actions of princes are like those great rivers, the course of which every one beholds, but their springs have been seen by few.” “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people.” “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious ointment, &c. and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion,” &c.

The advantage of this figure arises from the illustration which the simile employed gives to the principal object; from the clearer view which it presents; or the more strong impression which it stamps upon the mind. Observe the effect of it in the following instance: The author is explaining the distinction between the powers of sense and imagination in the human mind. “As wax,” says he, “would not be adequate to the purpose of signature, if it had not the power to retain as well as to receive the impression, the same holds of the soul with respect to sense and imagination. Sense is its receptive power; imagination, its retentive. Had it sense without imagination, it would not be as wax, but as water, where, though all impressions be instantly made, yet as soon as they are made, they are instantly lost.”

In comparisons of this nature, the understanding is concerned much more than the fancy: and therefore the rules to be observed, with respect to them, are, that they be clear, and that they be useful; that they tend to render our conception of the principal object more distinct; and that they do not lead our view aside, and bewilder it with any false light. We should always remember that similes are not arguments: however apt they may be; they do no more than explain the writer's sentiments; they do not prove them to be founded in truth.

Comparisons ought not to be founded on likenesses which are too faint and remote. For these, in place of



assisting, strain the mind to comprehend them, and throw no light upon the subject. It is also to be observed, that a comparison which, in the principal circumstances, carries a sufficiently near resemblance, may become unnatural and obscure, if pushed too far. Nothing is more opposite to the design of this figure, than to hunt after a great number of coincidences in minute points, merely to show how far the writer's ingenuity can stretch the resemblance.

A *Metonymy* is founded on the several relations, of cause and effect, container and contained, sign and thing signified. When we say: "They read Milton," the cause is put instead of the effect; meaning "Milton's works." On the other hand, when it is said, "Grey hairs should be respected," we put the effect for the cause, meaning by "grey hairs," *old age*. "The kettle boils," is a phrase where the name of the container is substituted for that of the thing contained. "To assume the sceptre" is a common expression for entering on royal authority; the sign being put for the thing signified.

When the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole; a genus for a species, or a species for a genus; in general, when any thing less, or any thing more, is put for the precise object meant; the figure is then called a *Synecdoche* or *Comprehension*. It is very common, for instance, to describe a whole object by some remarkable part of it: as when we say: "A fleet of twenty *sail*," in the place of "*ships*;" when we use the "*head*" for the "*person*," the "*waves*" for the "*sea*." In like manner, an attribute may be put for a subject: as, "Youth" for the "young, the "deep" for the "sea;" and sometimes a subject for its attribute.

*Personification*, or *Prosopopoeia*, is that figure by which we attribute life and action to inanimate objects. The use of this figure is very natural and extensive: there is a wonderful proneness in human nature, under emotion, to animate all objects. When we say, "the ground *thirsts* for rain," or, "the earth *smiles* with plenty;" when we

speak of "Ambition's being *refilefs*," or "a disease's being *deceitful*;" such expressions shew the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things that are inanimate, or to abstract conceptions of its own forming. The following are striking examples from the Scriptures: "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Judah from a people of strange language; the sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea! that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them: and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

*Apostrophe* is a turning off from the regular course of the subject, to address some person or thing: as "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?"

The following is an instance of personification and apostrophe united: "O thou sword of the Lord! how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put thyself up into thy scabbard, rest and be still! How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord hath given it a charge against Askelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it." See also an extraordinary example of these figures, in the 14th chapter of Isaiah, from the 4th to the 19th verse, where the prophet describes the fall of the Assyrian empire.

The next figure in order, is *Antithesis*. Comparison is founded on the resemblance; antithesis, on the contrast or opposition of two objects. Contrast has always the effect, to make each of the contrasted objects appear in the stronger light. White, for instance, never appears so bright as when it is opposed to black; and when both are viewed together. An author, in his defence of a friend against the

charge of murder, expresses himself thus: "Can you believe that the person whom he scrupled to slay, when he might have done so with full justice, in a convenient place, at a proper time, with secure impunity; he made no scruple to murder against justice, in an unfavourable place, at an unseasonable time, and at the risk of capital condemnation?"

The following examples further illustrate this figure.

Tho' deep, yet clear; tho' gentle, yet not dull;  
Strong, without rage; without o'erflowing, full.

"If you seek to make one rich, study not to increase his stores, but to diminish his desires."

"If you regulate your desires according to the standard of nature, you will never be poor; if according to the standard of opinion, you will never be rich."

A maxim, or moral saying, very properly receives the form of the two last examples; both because it is supposed to be the fruit of meditation, and because it is designed to be engraven on the memory, which recalls it more easily by the help of such contracted expressions. But where such sentences frequently succeed each other; where this becomes an author's favourite and prevailing manner of expressing himself, his style appears too much studied and laboured; it gives us the impression of an author attending more to his manner of saying things, than to the things themselves.

*Interrogation.* The unfigured, literal use of interrogation, is to ask a question; but when men are strongly moved, whatever they would affirm or deny, with great earnestness, they naturally put in the form of a question, expressing thereby the strongest confidence of the truth of their own sentiment, and appealing to their hearers for the impossibility of the contrary. Thus Balaam expressed himself to Balak: "The Lord is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said it? and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken it? and shall he not make it good?"



*Exclamations* are the effect of strong emotions of the mind; such as, surprise, admiration, joy, grief, and the like. “Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” *Psalms*.

“O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men!” *Jeremiah*.

The last figure of speech that we shall mention, is what writers call *Amplification* or *Climax*. It consists in heightening all the circumstances of an object or action, which we desire to place in a strong light. We shall give an instance from the charge of a judge to the jury, in the case of a woman accused of murdering her own child: “Gentlemen, if one man had anyhow slain another; if an adversary had killed his opposer, or a woman occasioned the death of her enemy; even these criminals would have been capitally punished by the Cornelian law: but, if this guiltless infant, who could make no enemy, had been murdered by its own nurse, what punishments would not then the mother have demanded? With what cries and exclamations would she have stunned your ears? What shall we say then, when a woman, guilty of homicide, a mother, of the murder of her innocent child, hath comprised all those misdeeds in one single crime; a crime, in its own nature, detestable; in a woman, prodigious; in a mother, incredible; and perpetrated against one whose age called for compassion, whose near relation claimed affection, and whose innocence deserved the highest favour.”

We have now finished what was proposed, concerning Perspicuity in single words and phrases, and the accurate construction of sentences. The former has been considered, under the heads of Purity, Propriety, and Precision; and the latter, under those of Clearness, Unity, Strength, and the proper use of Figurative Language. Though many of

those attentions, which have been recommended, may appear minute, yet their effect, upon writing and style, is much greater than might, at first, be imagined. A sentiment which is expressed in accurate language, and in a period, clearly, neatly, and well arranged, makes always a stronger impression on the mind, than one that is expressed inaccurately, or in a feeble or embarrassed manner. Every one feels this upon a comparison; and if the effect be sensible in one sentence, how much more in a whole discourse, or composition that is made up of such sentences?

The fundamental rule for writing with accuracy, and into which all others might be resolved, undoubtedly is, *to communicate, in correct language, and in the clearest and most natural order, the ideas which we mean to transfuse into the minds of others.* Such a selection and arrangement of words, as do most justice to the sense, and express it to most advantage, make an agreeable and strong impression. To these points have tended all the rules which have been given. Did we always think clearly, and were we, at the same time, fully masters of the language in which we write, there would be occasion for few rules. Our sentences would then, of course, acquire all those properties of clearness, unity, strength, and accuracy, which have been recommended. For we may rest assured, that, whenever we express ourselves ill, besides the mismanagement of language, there is, for the most part, some mistake in our manner of conceiving the subject. Embarrassed, obscure, and feeble sentences, are generally, if not always, the result of embarrassed, obscure, and feeble thought. Thought and expression act and re-act upon each other. The understanding and language have a strict connexion; and they who are learning to compose and arrange their sentences with accuracy and order, are learning, at the same time, to *think* with accuracy and order; a consideration which *alone* will recompense the student, for his attention to this branch of literature.

## CONCLUSION.

THE Compiler of the preceding Grammar, and the Observations on Perspicuity and Accuracy of Expression, hopes it will not be deemed inconsistent with the nature and design of his work, to make a short address to the young students, respecting their future walks in the paths of literature, and the chief purpose to which they should apply their acquisitions.

In forming and publishing this compilation, the Author has been influenced by a desire to facilitate your progress in learning, and to assist the labours of those, who are endeavouring to lay a proper foundation for improving your understandings, and for the rational and useful employment of your time; in place of those frivolous pursuits, and that love of ease and sensual pleasure, which enfeeble and corrupt the minds of many inconsiderate youth, and render them useless to society.

He hopes, therefore, that you will effectually co-operate with the labours of your friends to promote your happiness; and that you will not rest satisfied with mere literary acquisitions, nor with a selfish or contracted application of them. When they advance only the interests of this stage of being, and look not beyond the present transient scene, their influence is circumscribed within a very narrow sphere. The great business of this life is to prepare, and qualify us, for the enjoyment of a better, by cultivating a pure and humble state of mind, and cherishing habits of piety towards God, and benevolence to men. Every thing that promotes or retards this important work, is of great moment to you, and claims your first and most serious attention.

If, then, the cultivation of letters, and an advancement in knowledge, be found to strengthen and enlarge your



minds, to purify and exalt your pleasures, and to dispose you to pious and virtuous sentiments and conduct, they produce excellent effects, which, with your best endeavours to improve them, and the Divine blessing superadded, will not fail to render you, not only wise and good yourselves, but also the happy instruments of diffusing wisdom, religion, and goodness around you. Thus improved, they become handmaids to virtue; and may eventually serve to increase the rewards, which Infinite Goodness has promised to your faithful labours, for the advancement of truth and righteousness amongst men.

But if you counteract the hopes of your friends, and the tendency of these attainments; if you grow proud and vain of your real or imaginary distinctions, and regard with contempt, the virtuous, unlettered mind; if you suffer yourselves to be absorbed in over-curious or trifling speculations; if your heart and principles be debased and poisoned, by the influence of corrupting and pernicious books, for which no elegance of composition can make amends; if you spend so much of your time in literary engagements, as to make them interfere with higher occupations, and lead you to forget, that pious and benevolent action is the great end of your being: if such be the unhappy misapplication of your acquisitions and advantages, instead of becoming a blessing to you, they will prove the occasion of greater condemnation; and may, in the hour of solemn reflection, justly excite the regretful sentiments,—that it would have been better for you, to have remained illiterate and unambitious; to have been confined to the humblest walks of life; and to have been even hewers of wood and drawers of water all your days.

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*J. AP 58*  
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